2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1



000 hurry or else it was an expression frequently used to rationalize their casual manner. I never saw a peasant with a watch.

101 These quiet people of Dragalevtsy, whose way of life is not very different from that of peasants throughout the Balkans, are more than just Bulgarian peasants who arose in the seventh century from a dash of Tartar added to a predominantly Slavic mixture. They are a special breed of Bulgarians called *Shopi,* a term originally meaning boorish. That is, a *Shop* was a bumpkin. Some authorities say that this term was derived from *sop,* the long staff which the men of this area carried. Since those living in the *Shopsko* area, or the immediate vicinity of Sofia and Mount Vitosha, are in general more conservative than villagers elsewhere in Bulgaria, the word *Shopi* also carried the idea [144] of backwardness and mental simplicity. Among the many attempts to explain the special physical characteristics of these people, the most plausible theory is that of descent from the Pechenegi, or Mongolian tribesmen who infiltrated into that section of Bulgaria and nearby eastern Serbia in the eleventh century. Historians deal none too kindly with these Pechenegi; nor do the *Shopi* receive many compliments in contemporary accounts. Even their physical appearance is considered unattractive by many other Bulgarians.

● 142 From faces naturally swarthy, further darkened and weather-beaten by sun, rain, and biting winds, the small round eyes of Asia stare through one without giving an inkling of the impression registered. In the thin-lipped mouths of the young the teeth are gleaming white; beneath the drooping mustaches of middle-aged men teeth show yellowish in a rare childlike smile; and toothless gums accompany [302] the gray stubbly beards of the old. Straight, prominent noses lend ruggedness rather than beauty; the customary clipping of the scraggly black hair of the men reveals wrinkled, leathery necks; the hair of the women is worn in braids down the back, and hangs from beneath a kerchief that covers the top of the head. Here, too, age is clearly marked. The glossy, thick braids of the girls all too soon become, with advancing years, dull and thin and are often pieced out with other, brighter hair. The men are of medium height. Because their shoulders are so broad and their chests so powerful, their short, sturdy legs seem out of proportion. The women, slightly shorter, walk erect

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unless stooped by age. Hands seldom gloved in winter are rough and dirty and calloused. I often thought that one of the strangest things about death was the way it quieted the hands of these simple folk, who, although reserved in demeanor, constantly gestured when they spoke.

I grew accustomed to the mannerisms of the people as well as to the flavor of village life by slow degrees. At first I was attracted most by the gala occasions, or the spectacular. There was the annual Christmas *horo* (folk dance) which provided the first break in the monotony of winter. On a comfortably mild Christmas Day old women and little children, the first to arrive in the main village square, sat in twos and threes waiting for the dancing to begin. Girls in their Sunday best, with necklaces of gold coins flashing in the sunlight, passed through the square and sang as they walked. They were bareheaded, since they could not yet wear the married women's head kerchief. As they drew closer, the blotches of rouge, the tremendous earrings, belts laden with clinking silver pieces, and heavy bracelets showed that the girls considered this no ordinary holiday. They formed a line, side by side, and began the dance after persuading the gypsy musicians to strike up a tune; one by one the boys who had come out of the taverns joined the moving line: one step to the right, one step to the left, then three steps to the right, kicking high as they stepped. As the dancing progressed, many married women participated, while the married men looked on with condescending interest. The little children, dressed like miniature adults, gathered on the fringes of the crowd to imitate the dancers. Gossiping groups formed, buzzed, and then dissolved to form anew.

A commotion arose in the center of the square as two young men fought over the cane which was carried by the leader of the *horo*. The leader was supposed to pay the musicians for the dances he led, in exchange for which he could direct the dancers in a serpentine movement, always in step with the music, so that they wound in and out with a "crack-the-whip" at every major bend of the line. To the peasant, the boisterous physical activity gives an exhilaration little else can induce. In fact, some of the "young blades" at this *horo* were so carried away with animal spirits that they performed six or seven steps

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THE RISING GENERATION

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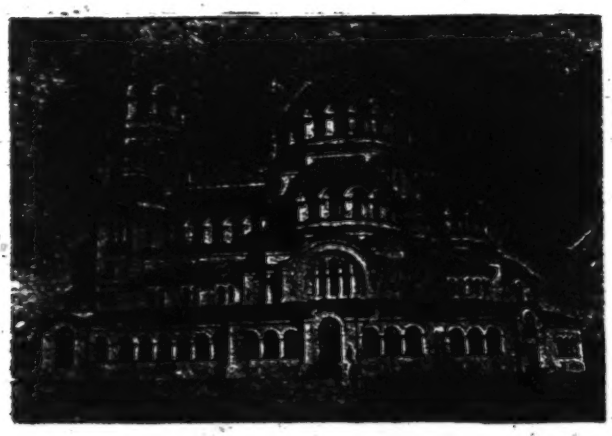

SOFIA: THE ALEX. NEVSKI CHURCH

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A GROUP OF PEASANTS

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A PEASANT GIRL PICKING ROSES

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A GROUP CF PEASANT WOMEN

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From left to right: D-r T. Yankov, M. Ilia Gheorgov, and the author

[facing p. 257]